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A CONTEMPORARY DEBATE AMONG ADVAITA VEDANTINS ON THE NATURE OF AVIDYĀ[1]

There is a current debate among Advaita Vedantins that has at stake the core tenets of Advaita – the possibility of non-duality (*advaita*) and of liberation (*mokṣa*) from *saṃsāra*. At the heart of the debate is a centuries-old dispute about the nature of *avidyā*, which, though commonly translated as ignorance, has a much wider significance in Advaita Vedanta. *Avidyā* has not only an epistemological meaning, but an ontological sense which is a major focus of the debate.

The topic of *avidyā* has a long history of controversy in the Advaita Vedanta tradition that may predate Śaṅkara.[2] It was Śaṅkara's treatment of *avidyā*, however, that triggered centuries of polemics by rival schools that criticized it, and Advaitins who defended it. Śaṅkara's views on *avidyā* are also the focus of the current debate.

It is legitimate to ask, however, how significant is the concept of *avidyā* to the core tenets of Vedantic thought? Are differences of opinion mere "scholastic disputes over words or modes of expression [which] have but little philosophical significance," as Surendranath Dasgupta maintains (Dasgupta, 1991: 11)? Of what significance is the nature of *avidyā* in understanding Śaṅkara's thought? Śaṅkara's commitment is to an inquiry into the nature of Brahman, not *avidyā*, as he clearly demonstrates on three different occasions where he abruptly dismisses a line of questioning that is pursuing the locus (*āśraya*) of *avidyā*. When asked to whom *avidyā* belongs, Śaṅkara

[1] Expanded from a paper presented to the Fourteenth International Vedanta Congress, Oxford, Ohio (April, 2004).

[2] Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (650-700 A.D.) in *ślokavārtika-sambandhākṣepaparihāra* 84 asks how *avidyā* can act on Brahman. "Since it is pure, and nothing other than that exists, how could *avidyā* have any activity (*pravṛtti*) on it, like in a dream?" *svayaṃ ca śuddharūpatvād asattvāc cānyavastunaḥ* | *svapnādivad avidyāyāḥ pravṛttis tasya kiṃkṛtā* || Kumārila may be arguing against the Buddhists here, rather than against *avidyā* as a material cause, but the commentator, Pārthasārathi Miśra (1075 A.D.), calls the proponents of this view "those who hold that the self is non-dual" (*ātmādvaitavādins*). Also, Maṇḍana Miśra (660-720 A.D.), presenting the view of an opponent in the *Brahmasiddhi*, speaks of "those who contend that ignorance is the material cause of difference," (*avidyopādāna-bheda-vādibhiḥ*). *Brahmasiddhi*, p. 10.

replies that it belongs to the one who is asking the question, "'If you ask, 'Whose then, is this *avidyā*?' we say, 'It is yours, the one who asks.'"[3] Or, it belongs to the one who sees it. "Here, one says, 'Whose is this *avidyā*?' For whomever it is seen, it is his alone." And Śaṅkara goes on to say that the question "Who sees *avidyā*?" is meaningless.[4] In the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, the same question, framed slightly differently, asks whether the mutual superimposition (*adhyāropa*) of the body and the self on one another is done by the assemblage of the body, etc., by the self, Śaṅkara responds, "Whether it is done by the assemblage of the body, etc., or it is done by the self, what of it?" When the student persists and concludes that the superimposition is done by himself, Śaṅkara cryptically replies, "Then don't do it."[5] These answers may be a method of circumventing the logical difficulties in assigning the locus of *avidyā* either to the individual (*jīva*) or Brahman, as Mayeda suggests (Mayeda, 1979: 79), or they may be a way of dealing with the reality of *avidyā*, as Hacker suggests, observing that these answers, though "not philosophically exact" are "pedagogically compelling" (Hacker, 1995: 65–66). In any event, they underscore Śaṅkara's commitment to revealing the nature of Brahman, and to that end, removing *avidyā*, not investigating its nature, a topic that, in contrast, occupied the attention of many of his successors. There is good reason for this preoccupation, however.

The concept of *avidyā* is crucial to the Advaita position, for without it, there is no non-duality (*advaita*). The perceived duality is sublated as a reality by the knowledge of an underlying non-dual reality. Understanding the duality as real is an error, which is a function of ignorance (*avidyā*) of the non-dual reality. Recognizing that the tenability of *advaita* is dependent upon the establishment of *avidyā*, criticisms of *avidyā* are numerous among the opponents of Advaita Vedanta. If the concept of *avidyā* can be dismantled, *advaita* is untenable. The most well known, though not the first, serious critic of *avidyā* was Rāmānuja (1017–1137) who opened the *Śrībhāṣya*, his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, with a 140-page *mahā-siddhānta*,

[3] *Kasya punar ayam aprabodha iti cet | yas tvaṃ pṛcchasi tasya ta iti vadāmaḥ* BSBh 4.1.3., 833 in *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣyam with the commentaries Bhāṣyaratnaprabhā of Govindānānda, Bhāmatī of Vācaspatimiśra, Nyāyanirṇaya of Ānandagiri*, ed. J.L. Shastri (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980).

[4] *atrāha sāvidyā kasya iti | yasya dṛśyate tasyaiva*, BGBh 13.2, 311 in *Bhagavadgītā Śāṅkarabhāṣya Hindī-anuvāda-sahita* (Gorakpur: Gītā Press, 1988).

[5] *kim bhagavān dehātmanor itaretarādhyāropeṇa dehādisaṅghātakṛtā athavātmakṛteti | gururuvāca yadi dehādisaṅghātakṛtā yadi vātmakṛtā kim tatra syāt |* U.S. 2.2.62–65.

offering seven reasons why *avidyā* as presented by Śaṅkara is untenable (*saptānupapatti*). The conflict over the nature of *avidyā* has been primarily between the Viśiṣṭādvaitins or the Madhva dualists, on the one hand, and the Advaitins on the other, and has continued into this century.[6] Recently, however, an interesting development has occurred which is the focus of the current controversy.

Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswati (1880–1975), a scholar, prolific author and professed Advaitin criticized the Advaita tradition's interpretation of *avidyā*, not as an opponent of Śaṅkara, but as an adherent.[7] He advanced the view that all the post-Śaṅkara commentators, apart from Sureśvara, have misinterpreted Śaṅkara's representation of *avidyā*. As a result, he maintained, the current

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[6] Among the earliest to attempt to refute the tenability of *avidyā* was Bhāskara (750 A.D.), who held that there is both identity and difference (*bhedābheda*), and elaborately criticized the *avidyā* of Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, the *Bhāskarabhāṣya*. The Viśiṣṭādvaitin, Yāmunācārya (916–1038 A.D.) argued to refute the Advaita concept of *avidyā* in his *Saṃvit-siddhi*, and his critique was subsequently elaborated upon by Rāmānuja (1017–1137). Rāmānuja's arguments were further elaborated upon by his commentators Sudarśana and Vedānta Deśika in the *Śrūtaprakāśikā* and *Ṣaṭadūṣaṇī respectively*. The Advaita tradition has responded to these criticisms, most notably in the *Advaitasiddhi*, Madhusūdana Saraswati's (1570 A.D.) response to Vyāsarāya's (1478–1539 A.D.) criticism of *avidyā* in his *Nyāyāmṛta*. Advaitins maintain that the ciriticisms of *avidyā* in Advaita are based on a faulty understanding of Śaṅkara's concept of *avidyā* and of the nature of consciousness. Rāmānuja's seven 'untenables' (*saptānupapatti*) have been closely analyzed in this regard by a twentieth century pandit, Anantakrishna Shastri (1991), whose work, *Ṣaṭabhūṣaṇī* , was a refutation of Vedānta Deśika's *Ṣaṭadūṣaṇī*. For a brief history of this discussion, see John Grimes (1990), *The Seven Great Untenables*, pp. 3–4.

[7] Swami Satchidanandendra's core ideas appear in his first Sanskrit work, the *Mulāvidyānirāsa*, published in 1929 under his *pūrvāśrama* name, Yellambalase Subbaraya (also Y. Subbarao, Subba Rao and Y. Subramanya Sarman). As the title suggests, this is primarily a detailed refutation of the Advaita tradition's presentation of *avidyā* as having a causal component (*mūlāvidyā*). Satchidanandendra authored over 200 works in Sanskrit, Kannada and English, each targeting a different type of readership; Sanskrit for his "orthodox section of the earnest students of Advaita Vedanta" (*Māṇḍūkya Rahasya Vivṛti* 1958: Introduction, p.1), Kannada as the vernacular for the lay people of his region, and English for both interested seekers and non-Sanskritic scholars, whom he generally disparages and considers less serious. Among his Sanskrit works are *Vedāntaḍiṇḍima* (1934), a commentary on Narasimha Saraswati's work of the same name; *Sugamā* (1955) a commentary on Śaṅkara's introduction to the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, the *Pañcapādikaprasthāna* (1957) an analysis of selected portions of the *Pañcapādikā* which he compares with *Śaṅkarabhāṣya*; the *Māṇḍūkyarahasyavivṛti* (1958) an independent commentary on Gauḍapāda's *kārikā*s; the *Kleśāpahārini* (1968), an extensive commentary on Sureśvara's *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*. The monumental *Vedāntaprakriyāpratyabhijñā* was published in 1964 to establish the method of Vedānta, which he determined as superimposition and negation (*adhyāropa-apavāda)*. This work is also a detailed

Advaita tradition, exemplified by the Śṛṅgeri and Kāñchi Śaṅkarācārya Maṭhs, is propagating an inaccurate view of Śaṅkara, and one that is incompatible with non-duality (*advaita*) and with liberation (*mokṣa*). He offered his own interpretation of Śaṅkara on *avidyā*,[8] for which he found endorsement in Gauḍapāda. Consequently, he reduced the lineage of authentic Advaita *ācāryas* to Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, Sureśvara, and, implicitly, himself. He urged a return to the study of Śaṅkara without what he considered the contaminating influences of the post-Śaṅkara commentators. In his lifetime he appealed to the Advaita tradition to concur with his position, engaging in a life-long dialogue with representatives of the Śṛṅgeri and Kāñchi Śaṅkarācārya Maṭhs, and with traditional Advaita pandits.[9]

(Footnote 7 Continued)
analysis of the works of pre and post-Śaṅkara commentators *vis a vis* their consistency with Śaṅkara. The *Śāṅkaravedānataprakriyā* (1971) originally written in Kannada in 1956 is an exposition of the main features of Śaṅkara's works. It was subsequently translated into Tamil and Telegu, and into English as the *Salient Features of Śaṅkara's Vedanta* (1967). In 1974, just one year before his *mahāsamādhi* at the age of 95, Satchidanandendra published a fresh commentary on Śaṅkara's introduction to the *Brahmasūtras*, the *adhyāsabhāṣya*. He intended the work, *Śāṅkaravedāntamīmāṃsābhāṣya*, to be the first part of a new commentary on the first five *adhikaraṇa*s of the *Brahmasūtras*, but due to failing eyesight was only able to complete the first part of this work. A posthumous publication of *Paramahaṃsamīmāṃsā* was brought out in 1994 by his "grand-disciple" Kesavadhani, grandson of Swami Advaitanandendra, one of the first disciples of Swami Satchidanandendra. In this work Satchidanandendra analyzes the *śruti* and *smṛti* passages concerned with *sannyāsa-viddhis*.

[8] The *Mulāvidyānirāsa* (1929), Swami Satchidanandendra's first publication, is the primary source used in this work for his thoughts on the nature of *avidyā*. In this work he gives his most comprehensive treatment of this topic and the arguments presented there appeared repeatedly throughout his subsequent publications. The original Sanskrit work is out of print and there are no plans to reprint it, though the English translation of A. J. Alston has been printed as *The Heart of Śaṅkara*, by Shanti Sadan, London (1993). The work is organized into 187 short numbered sections and in referencing this work, I have used the Sanskrit text and referred to the relevant sections as paragraph numbers, except where there is a specific quote, in which case I have given the page number along with the paragraph number.

[9] In 1961 Satchidanandendra published the *Vijñapti*, a detailed account of his differences with the Advaita tradition, which by this time had spanned more than 30 years. The *Vijñapti* was accompanied by a pamphlet "An Appeal to Thoughtful Vedantins" in which he listed three 'Points to be Settled,' to which he urged Advaita Pandidts to respond. This was followed in 1962 by his edited collection of some of those responses, the *Vedāntavidvadgoṣṭhī*, along with his own English summary of each.

These Advaitins, and their contemporary counterparts, reject Satchidanandendra's understanding of *avidyā*, finding it, in turn, inadequate for the establishment of non-duality (*advaita*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). Through publications and public debate, they have defended the view of *avidyā* elaborated by the post-Śaṅkara commentators, and argued for its fidelity to Śaṅkara.[10]

POST-ŚAṄKARA ADVAITA COMMENTATORS' INTERPRETATION OF *AVIDYĀ*

To review the well-known Advaita Vedānta tradition's understanding of *avidyā*, it is considered a twofold power (*śakti*) that has the capacity to both conceal reality (*āvaraṇa-śakti*), and project an error (*vikṣepa-śakti*). Due to the concealing power of *avidyā*, an individual is denied the knowledge that (a) the world is not separate from Brahman, its 'cause' and (b) that Brahman is the nature of himself. Since what is concealed is the reality of a self-evident being, one's own self, this concealing power of *avidyā* provides the basis for a mistake. A projection is inevitable, and transpires in the mind of the individual as an error about the nature of the self as limited in terms of time, place, etc. This error is a superimposition (*adhyāropa/adhyāsa*) upon the unrecognized reality, Brahman. There is a cause–effect relationship between the concealing factor and the projected error; that is, the concealment (*āvaraṇa*) is the cause for the projection (*vikṣepa*) of the error. On the principle of the material cause inhering in the effect, both the concealing factor and its effect, the projection, are called *avidyā*. To distinguish between them, some post-Śaṅkara commentators refer to the concealing factor as "root-ignorance" (*mūlāvidyā*) in keeping with its

[10] Opposing the views in the *Vijñapti* (see note 9 above) were S. Subramanya Sastri, Madras; K. Krsna Joshi Sarma, Bangalore; S. S. Raghavacarya, Mysore; and Laksminarasimha Sastri. Supporting Satchidanandendra's views were his student, Laksminarasimahmurti, S. Vittala Sastri, the *āsthānavidvān* of the Mysore Court; Joshi Ramakrsna Sarma; S, S, Ventkatesa Sarmsrti; P. Subrahmanya Sarma; and S. Anantamurti Sastri. Polagam Srirama Sastri did not respond to the *Vijñapti*, but in the *Vedāntavidvadgoṣṭhī* Satchidanandendra printed selected portions of Polagam Srirama Sastri's Introduction to the *Pañcapādikā* in which he had criticized Satchidanandendra's views. One of the respondents to the *Vijñapti*, K. Krsna Joshi, published a more extensive defense of the traditional views in his *Mūlāvidyā Bhāṣya-vārtika-sammatā*. A rebuttal to this, the *Mūlāvidyā Bhāṣya-vārtika-viruddhā* was published by S. Vittala Sastri shortly after the *mahāsamādhi* of Swami Satchidanandendra. A few months after its publication, these two authors, K. Krsna Joshi and S. Vittala Sastri, were the principle participants in a debate at Bangalore to try to settle the issue of Śaṅkara's position on *mūlāvidyā* (see note 39).

causal status.[11] The reality that is concealed in the mind of an individual who has *avidyā* is Brahman, the cause of the world (*jagat*).

The Advaita *ācāryas* hold that *avidyā* is not mere absence of knowledge. It is considered to have some kind of existence (*kiñcid bhāvarūpa*),[12] because of its capacity to produce a manifest error. It exists, however, only until it is dispelled by a cognition (*vṛtti-jñāna*) that is its opposite, as light is opposite to darkness. Thus, the negative particle (*a* = *nañ*) in *a-jñāna* or *a-vidyā* is understood in the sense of opposition, *virodhārthe nañ*. *Avidyā* is something (*bhāvarūpa*), which stands opposed to knowledge. Knowledge being its opposite (*ajñāna-virodhi*), has the capacity to remove it. The cognition that dispels the *avidyā* has the same degree of reality as *avidyā*. Both are *mithyā*, being dependent for their existence on Brahman.

As an ontological term, the Advaita *ācāryas* consider *avidyā* synonymous with *māyā*, the factor introduced to account for the world (*jagat*). While Brahman is the unequivocal cause of the *jagat*, both intelligent and material (*abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa*), since Brahman is entirely without form and attributes, it cannot completely account for the name-form creation as its product. *Māyā/avidyā*, though not real, in that it is dependent for its existence on Brahman, provides, together with Brahman, the cause for the name-form world (*jagat*). The manifest *jagat* has the same degree of reality as its cause, *māyā/avidyā*; both are dependent on Brahman for their existence, and are therefore *mithyā*. Drawing support from Śaṅkara,[13] the Advaita tradition holds that, in addition to *māyā* the words *avyākṛta*, *avyakta*, *prakṛti*, *ākāśa*, and *akṣara* are also synonyms of *avidyā*. They all signify the unmanifest, undifferentiated, causal condition of the *jagat*.

This causal *avidyā* is also present in sleep, accounting for the oblivion experienced by the individual in that state. In sleep, the mind, shrouded in *avidyā*, is aware of neither the self nor anything else. Consequently, there is no experience of the subject–object distinction that characterizes the dream and waking states, and also,

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[11] Maṇḍana Miśra, an elder contemporary of Śaṅkara, is considered the first commentator in the Advaita tradition to clearly define the distinction of a concealing causal *avidyā* and its projected effect, also called *avidyā*. The term *mūlāvidyā* was introduced later, probably by the post-Śaṅkara commentator Vācaspati Miśra (960 A.D.).

[12] Sadānanda Yogīndra, *Vedāntasāra* 2.33.

[13] Most notably, *avidyātmikā hi bījaśaktir avyaktaśabdanirdeśyā parameśvarāśrayā māyāmayī mahāsuptiḥ... tad etad avyaktam kvacid ākāśaśabdanirdiṣṭam... kvacid akṣaraśabdoditam... kvacin māyeti sūcitam*. BSBh 1.4.3, *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣyam*, p. 297. This is discussed in detail below. See note 32.

defines *saṃsāra*. This *avidyā* in sleep is the same causal *avidyā* which accounts for the effect, the manifest projection of the waking and dream worlds, to which the individual emerges from the state of sleep. Appropriately, the individual in sleep is said to be wholly identified with his 'causal body' (*kāraṇa-śarīra*).

SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA'S VIEWS ON *AVIDYĀ*[14]

Nature of Avidyā

Swami Satchidanandendra considers that *avidyā* is used by Śaṅkara only in the sense of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) – the mutual superimposition of the self and the not self, as well as their properties, on one another. He bases this on a definition of *avidyā* given by Śaṅkara in his introduction to the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*.

> "Still, superimposing on one thing, another, as well as its properties, due not distinguishing from one another the properties and their substantives which are completely different, mixing up reality and unreality, there is this natural/innate behavior [worldly expression], 'I am this; this is mine', caused by *mithyājñāna*... That superimposition thus described, the learned consider *avidyā*."[15]

Relying primarily on this definition and maintaining that it is the only definition of *avidyā* given by Śaṅkara, Swami Satchidanandendra proposes that superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is the only meaning of *avidyā* used by Śaṅkara. This *avidyā*/*adhyāsa*, Satchidanandendra maintains, is uncaused. He provisionally accepts that the *adhyāsa* is due to a lack of discrimination (*aviveka*) of the real and not real, and that this *aviveka* is also called absence of knowledge (*a-jñāna*). In discussing this absence of knowledge or *viveka*, Śaṅkara, he maintains, never uses the word *avidyā*, but rather, a number of synonyms that imply "want of knowledge," like *ajñāna*, *agrahaṇa*, *anavagama*, *anavabodha*. Thus the *nañ* in these compounds he reads as *abhāvārthe*

[14] Swami Satchidanandendra's thought was significantly influenced by his mentor Krishnaswamy Iyer, author of *Vedanta or the Science of Reality* (1930), though it was Satchidanandendra who systematically argued these ideas and sought support for them in Śaṅkara. The single idea that can be considered Satchidanandendra's original contribution is that there is no *avidyā* in sleep. He successfully argued this point with Krishnaswamy Iyer who then persuaded him to publish his findings in what became the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa* (1929).

[15] *tathāpy anyonyasminnanyonyātmakatām anyonydharmāṃś cādhasyetaretarāvivekenātyantaviviktyor dharmadharmiṇor mithyājñānanimittaḥ satyāṛte mithunīkṛtya ahamidaṃ mamedam iti naisargiko'yaṃ lokavyavahāraḥ |...tam etam evaṃ lakṣaṇam adhyāsaṃ paṇḍitā avidyeti manyante*. BSBh, Introduction, 9–10, 19.

nañ. He grants that because it is the cause of wrong knowledge "it is sometimes also called cause (*kāraṇa*)." So too, he writes, "Wrong knowledge is referred to in the authoritative texts as the 'effect' of absence of knowledge," (Satchidanandendra, 1989: 48) with 'effect' in quotations indicating his use of the term only as a provisional concession. Since this superimposition (*adhyāsa*), known as *avidyā*, is described by Śaṅkara as beginningless (*anādi*),[16] Swami Satchidanandendra concludes, finally, that *adhyāsa* can have no cause.

Swami Satchidanandendra, therefore, considers *avidyā* purely in its manifest form as error, which he also calls *mithyā-jñāna*, false knowledge. He does not accept a concealing power (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) as its cause, even in an epistemological sense. Where there is ignorance of the self, Swami Satchidanandendra considers this to be absence of knowledge (*jñāna-abhāva*), rather than the presence of a concealing power.

Naturally, Swami Satchidanandendra's concept of *avidyā* in Śaṅkara has no positive content (*bhāvarūpa*), nor does he accept any ontological sense of the word *avidyā*. Since Brahman is the only cause of the world, he rejects the concept of a causal *avidyā* (*mūlāvidyā*). He finds no support in Śaṅkara for a causal *avidyā* accounting for the projection of the world (*jagat*), and regards this as an invention of post-Śaṅkara commentators. He accepts *māyā*, *prakṛti*, *avyakta* as causal at the level of known experience (*vyavahāra*), but does not accept *avidyā*. It follows that he rejects the equating of *avidyā* with *māyā*, *prakṛti*, *avyakta*.

Central to Satchidanandendra's position is that there is no *avidyā* in the state of sleep; only the reality, Brahman, exists there. Consequently, the self is considered available in the state of sleep in its true form and the method of the analysis of the three states of experience (*avasthātraya-prakriyā*) assumes great importance.[17]

[16] *evam ayam anādir ananto naisargiko'dhyāso mithyāpratyaya-rūpaḥ kartṛtva-bhoktṛtva-pravartakaḥ sarva-loka-pratyakṣaḥ* BSBh Introduction, *Brahmasūtra-śāṅkarabhāṣyam,* p. 25.

[17] In his early works, beginning with the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, Swami Satchidanandendra maintained that the knowledge of reality is arrived at merely by an analysis of the three states of experience, waking, dream and sleep. All other methods were considered to either subserve or compliment this method and to be unable to reveal reality on their own. He reasoned that since there is nothing outside of these three states, when they are analyzed, the truth is understood (*Mūlāvidyānirāsa* para. 65–67, 174). A significant part of this analysis is the state of sleep. There, he maintains that because of the absence of any limiting adjunct (*upādhi*) the self is available in an unconditioned form. Later Satchidanandendra modified his position on the method of determining reality. Though the analysis of the three states always had primacy, his search to "determine the true method of Vedanta" (*Mūlāvidyānirāsa* para. 2, p. 2) finally resolved in *adhyāropa-apavāda,* the governing thesis of his *Vedānta-prakriyā-pratyabhijñā* (1964).

Source of divergent views

Satchidanandendra considers that the concept of a causal *avidyā* (*mūlāvidyā*) has gained a place in the Advaita Vedanta tradition because it has been the practice to study Śaṅkara through two interpreting schools of thought, the *Vivaraṇa*[18] and the *Bhāmatī prasthānas*.[19] The third interpretive tradition, the *Vārtika* school of Sureśvara, unlike the other two, Swami Satchidanandendra views as consistent with Śaṅkara on every issue, including *mūlāvidyā*.

Swami Satchidanandendra traces the introduction of the concept of *avidyā* as existent (*bhāvarūpa*), and as the material cause for the world (*jagad-upādāna-kāraṇa*) to Padmapāda. These and other key elements of the concept of *mūlāvidyā* were indeed discussed by the author of the *Pañcapādikā*, though he does not use the term *mūlāvidyā*. The crux of the problem is Padmapāda's reading of the compound *mithyājñānanimitta*, in the section of the introduction to the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* where Satchidanandendra determined that Śaṅkara has defined *avidyā* as *adhyāsa*. There, as we saw, Śaṅkara says that superimposing on one thing, another, "there is this natural/innate behavior [worldly expression], 'I am this; this is mine,' caused by *mithyājñāna*."[20]

In commenting on this *bhāṣya*, Padmapāda resolves the compound *mithyājñānanimittaḥ* as *mithyā-ajñāna-nimitta* and Swami Satchidanandendra translates Padmapāda's commentary on this passage from Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* as,

"The compound word *mithyājñāna* is made up of the words *mithyā* and *ajñāna*. *Mithyā* means *anirvacanīya* [not definable] and *ajñāna* means the insentient potentiality of *avidyā* as opposed to *jñāna* or sentiency. *Adhyāsa* has this *avidyā-śakti* [power of *avidyā*] for its *nimitta* [cause], i.e., *upādāna* or material cause. This is the meaning."[21]

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[18] The *Vivaraṇa* tradition originates from the *Pañcapādikā*, a commentary by Padmapāda on Śaṅkara's *bhāṣya* on the first four *Brahmasūtras*.

[19] The *Bhāmatī* tradition is based on the *Brahmasūtra* commentary of the same name by Vācaspati Miśra.

[20] BSBh, Introduction, *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 9–10, see note 15 above.

[21] Satchidanandendra, *Vedānta-prakriyā-pratyabhijñā*, pp. 106–107, English translation of *mithyājñāna-nimittaḥ iti| mithyā ca tad ajñānaṃ ca mithyājñānam | mithyeti anirvananīyatocyate| ajñānam iti ca jaḍātmakāvidyā-śaktir jñāna-paryudāsenocyate| tannimttaḥ tad upādāna ity arthaḥ. Śrī Padmapādācārya's Pañcapādikā with the Commentaries Vivaraṇa by Śrī Prakāśātmamuni, Tattvadīpana by Śrī Akhaṇḍanandamuni and Ṛjuvivaraṇa by Śrī Viṣṇubhaṭṭopādhyāya*. (1992) p. 46.

Swami Satchidanandendra finds several difficulties in this passage from the *Pañcapādikā*. The most important one is Padmapāda's resolution of Śaṅkara's compound *mithyājñāna* as *mithyā-ajñāna*, it is ignorance and it is false (*mithyā ca tad ajñānaṃ ca mithyājñānam*). As we saw, Swami Satchidanandendra understands it as *mithyā-jñāna*, "false knowledge" or error. Other problems that he has are the various characterizations of *avidyā* as indeterminable (*anirvacanīya*), inert (*jaḍa*), a power (*śakti*) and the opposite of knowledge (*jñāna-paryudāsa*). Satchidanandendra particularly rejects the assertion that the power of *avidyā* (*avidyā-śakti*) is the material (*upādāna*) cause of superimposition (*adhyāsa*).

The concept of *avidyā* as a twofold power, one concealing and one projecting, existing in a cause–effect relationship, Swami Satchidanandendra traces to Maṇḍana Miśra. Presenting it as the view of an opponent, which he subsequently accepts, Maṇḍana characterizes *avidyā* as a failure to apprehend (*agrahaṇa*), resulting in an erroneous apprehension (*viparyaya*).[22] Though Satchidanandendra attributed the introduction of the concept of this twofold *avidyā* to Maṇḍana, he determined that it was elaborated upon and firmly established in the Advaita tradition by Vācaspati Miśra in his *Bhāmatī*.[23]

To the extent that they subscribed to these ideas of Padmapāda and Maṇḍana/Vācaspati, on *avidyā*, Satchidanandendra considers that subsequent commentators in the Advaita tradition have erroneously presented the Advaita position.[24] In his estimation, only Gauḍapāda, Śaṇkara, and Sureśvara have maintained fidelity to the Advaita tradition in understanding *avidyā* only in the sense of superimposition (*adhyāsa*).

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[22] *tasmād agrahaṇa-viparyaya-grahaṇe dve'vidye kārya-kāraṇa-bhāvenāvasthite*, *Brahmasiddhi by Ācārya Maṇḍanamiśra,* pp. 149–150. See also *Brahmasiddhi,* p. 9, 20, 32, 33, 122.

[23] In his commentary on BS 1.3.30, Vācaspati says that at the time of dissolution (*mahāpralaya*), the mind and other phenomena are "dissolved in their own cause, the *anirvacanīya-avidyā*," and "abide there in a subtle potential form along with the impressions of *avidyā* which are the tendencies to the projections of actions. *svakaraṇe anirvacanīya-avidyāyāṃ līnaḥ* ... *sukṣmeṇa śaktirūpeṇa karma-vikṣepakāvidyā-vāsanābhiḥ saha avatiṣṭanta eva*. *Bhāmatī* on BS 1.3.30. Translation is Satchidanandendra's, *Vedānta-prakriyā-pratyabhijñā*, 114.

[24] In addition to the nature of *avidyā*, there are other issues on which these *prasthānas* differ significantly, both from each other and from Śaṅkara. The conclusions I draw about the post-Śaṅkara commentators fidelity to Śaṅkara on the issue of *avidyā* do not extend to other issues, each of which requires an independent analysis.

Implications

For Swami Satchidanandendra and his adherents,[25] the view that *avidyā* has a causal form (*mūlāvidyā*), is a misrepresentation of Advaita with far-reaching consequences.[26] The most serious is that the concept of a *mūlāvidyā* makes it impossible to prove non-duality, for if *mūlāvidyā* is postulated as a cause of the world, this undermines Brahman's status as the only cause. If there is a cause other than Brahman, there is duality.[27] The presence of *avidyā* in sleep is similarly problematic, for if *avidyā* is present in all three states, it is real, as real as Brahman, and therefore, a second reality.[28] With a *mūlāvidyā* as an independent reality parallel to Brahman, there is duality. Consequently, there is no release (*mokṣa*) of the individual from the knower-known duality, which constitutes *saṃsāra*.

ADVAITINS' ARGUMENTS AGAINST SATCHIDANANDENDRA

The response of the Advaita tradition to Swami Satchidanandendra has been thorough and sustained. A full treatment of it is beyond the scope of a single paper, so I will just touch on one or two points here. The most vigorous respondent to Satchidanandendra's challenge was his elder contemporary, the eminent Polagam Śrīrāma Śāstri, who devotes more than 100 pages of his introduction to the *Pañcapādikā* to refuting Satchidanandendra's views.[29] There, he identifies Swami Satchidanandendra's position as a reworking of the views of the Sanskrit grammarian, Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (1650–1750) in his *Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta-laghumañjuṣā*.[30] Since the issue is the correct understanding of Śaṅkara, a common approach of both Swami

[25] See note 10 above.

[26] "It was the 'twist' of these commentators which gave rise … to the … Viśiṣṭādvaita of Śrī Rāmānuja and the Dvaita of Śrī Madhva." K.B. Ramakrishna Rao, Introduction to S. Viṭṭala Śāstri, *Mūlāvidyā-bhāṣya-vārtika-viruddhā*, p. 7.

[27] *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, para. 53, 129.

[28] ibid. para. 27.

[29] *Pañcapādikā of Śrīpadmapādācārya with Prabodhapariśodini of Ātmasvarūpa, Tātparyārthadyotini of Vijñānātman, Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa of Śrī Prakāśātman, Tātparydīpikā of Citsukhācārya and Bhāvaprakāśikā of Nṛsimhāśrama*, edited by S. Śrīrāma Śāstri and S.R. Krishnamurthi Śāstri (1958).

[30] There is some historical basis for this, as Satchidanandendra deeply revered and is reported to have studied with the Mahābhāgavata of Kurukoti, who was known in his time as an exponent of Nageśa Bhaṭṭa. Satchidanandendra's views on *avidyā* in Śaṅkara have several features in common with those of Nageśa Bhaṭṭa. Nageśa rejects the interpretation of *avidyā* as existent (*bhāvarūpa*), indeterminable (*anirvacanīya*) and beginningless (*anādi*). He maintains, rather, that *avidyā* in Śaṅkara's

Satchidanandendra and his opponents to defending their position is citing Śaṅkara.

Avidyā *and* Māyā/Prakṛti

Of the numerous *bhāṣya* passages which Śrīrāma Śāstri cites to demonstrate the causal nature of *avidyā*, one which is of particular interest[31] is Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahmasūtra* 1.4.3 (*tadadhīnatvād arthavat*).[32] Śaṅkara is demonstrating to an opponent that the causal (*bījātmaka*), unmanifest (*avyakta*) prior condition of this world (*prāgavasthā*), is not like the *pradhāna* of the Sāṅkhyas because it is dependent on *parameśvara*. The *pradhāna* of the Sāṅkhya, on the other hand, is independent. This prior condition has to be accepted, says Śaṅkara, because without it, one cannot establish that *parameśvara* has the status of a creator. This would make the *śruti* statements that *parameśvara* 'creates' the world (*jagat*) untena-

(Footnote 30 Continued)
commentaries signifies error (*bhrānti-jñāna*) and the impression created by it (*tat-saṃskāra*). He considers *avidyā* only as an effect, with an undifferentiated and differentiated manifestation, but no causal form. This is consistent with Satchidanandendra's representation of *avidyā* purely as an effect, and his rejection of a causal *avidyā*. Although in other ways Satchidanandendra's views on *avidyā* differ from those of Nageśa, the seeds for his understanding of *avidyā* in Śaṅkara only as superimposition (*adhyāsa*) can be seen here. It is likely, however, that Satchidanandendra was not aware of the Mahābhāgavata's adherence to Nageśa or the influence it had on his own thinking. When he was accused of plagiarizing Nageśa by S. Śrīrāma Śāstri, Satchidanandendra vigorously denied the charges and took pains to distance himself from Nageśa's views. While he agreed that *adhyāsa* is the meaning of *avidyā* in Śaṅkara, and that apparent objects cannot have a birth, Satchidanandendra said that he found Nageśa's views "fundamentally opposed to Shankara," (*Vedāntavidvadgoṣṭhī*, p. 34).

[31] This *bhāṣya* was also cited in a debate organized by Śṛṅgeri Maṭh in 1976 in Bangalore to try and resolve the issue of *mūlāvidyā*. See note 39 below.

[32] *yadi vayam svatantrām kāñcit prāgavasthām kāraṇatvenābhyupagacchema prasañjayema tadā pradhānkāraṇavādam | parameśvarādhīnā tv iyam asmābhiḥ prāgavasthā jagato'bhyupagamyate na svatantrā | sā cāvasyābhyupagantavyā | arthavatī hi sā | na hi tayā vinā parameśvarasya sraṣṭṛtvam siddhyati | śaktirahitasya tasya pravṛttyanupapatteḥ | muktānām ca punaranutpattiḥ | kutaḥ | vidyayā tasyā bījaśakter dahāt | avidyātmikā hi bījaśaktir avyakta-śabdanirdeśya parameśvarāśrayā māyāmayī mahāsuptiḥ | yasyām svarūpa-pratibodha-rahitāḥ śerate samsāriṇo jīvāḥ | tad etad avyaktam kvacid ākāśa-śabda-nirdiṣṭam 'etasminnu khalv akṣare gārgy ākāśa otaś ca protaś ca' iti śruteḥ | kvacid akṣara-śabdoditam 'akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ' iti śruteḥ | kvacin māyeti sūcitam 'māyām tu prakṛtim vidyān māyinam tu maheśvaram' iti mantravarṇāt | avyaktā hi sā māyā tattvāntatva-nirūpaṇasya-aśakyatvāt* BSBh 1.4.3, *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣyam,* pp. 297–298.

ble.[33] Without power (*śakti*), no activity (i.e. of creation) is possible. Since *śruti* attributes the activity of creation to *parameśvara*, the *śakti* required for that must necessarily reside with *parameśvara*.

Then Śaṅkara makes the argument that without the acceptance of *avidyā*, liberation is untenable. Liberation is due to the destruction of the causal potency (*bīja-śakti*) of *avidyā* by knowledge. The statement most germane to our discussion then follows. Śaṅkara reiterates that this causal potency (*bīja-śakti*) is in the form of *avidyā*, has its basis in *parameśvara* (*parameśvarāśraya*) and is called *avyakta*. He goes on to say that in it are sleeping the individuals (*saṃsāriṇaḥ*) who have no knowledge of their nature. This same *avyakta* is called *ākāśa* in some places. "In this imperishable *ākāśa*, Gārgī, is the warp and woof of creation," (BrU 3.8.11). In some places it is called *akṣara*. "The ultimate is beyond the highest imperishable, *akṣara*," (MuU 2.1.2). In some places it is called is it called *māyā*. "May one know *māyā* as the cause, *prakṛti*, while the one who wields the *māyā* is the Lord," (ŚvU 4.10).

It is not difficult to see why this is such a popular *bhāṣya* for the proponents of *mūlāvidyā*. Here we find the kernel of several important ideas. First there is the statement that the prior condition, or causal form, of the world is in the form of *avidyā*. Further, this *avidyā*, has a number of synonyms – *avyakta*, *ākāśa*, *akṣara* and *māyā*. From this is derived the equivalence of the words *avidyā* and *māyā*. Through the *Śvetāśvatara-śruti* quotation (ŚvU 4.10), these two, *avidyā* and *māyā*, are further equated to *prakṛti*. Further, this cause is a power (*śakti*) that belongs to *parameśvara*.

Some of the most striking equations of *avidyā* and *māyā/prakṛti* occur in Śaṅkara's comments on the *Bhagavadgītā*.[34] Śrīrāma Śāstri

[33] *sa īkṣata lokānnu sṛjā iti* AiU 1.1, *idam asṛjata* Tai.U 2.6.1; *tattejo'sṛjata* ChU 6.2.3; *idam sarvamasṛjata* BrU 1.2.4.

[34] *bhagavato māyāśaktiḥ kṣarākhyasya puruṣasya utpattibījam anekasaṃsāri-jantu-kāma-karmādi-saṃskārāśrayo'kṣaraḥ puruṣa ucyate* | BGBh 15.16 *Bhagavadgītā Śāṅkarabhāṣya Hindi-anuvādasahita*, p. 377.

svabhāvaḥ īśvarasya prakṛtiḥ triguṇātmikā māyā atha vā janmāntarakṛta-saṃskāraḥ prāṇināṃ vartmāna-janmani svakāryābhimukhatvenābhivyaktaḥ prabhavaḥ yeṣām guṇānām | BGBh 18.41, ibid. p. 434.

bhūtagrāma-bījabhūtād avidyālakṣaṇāt avyaktāt | BGBh 8.20, ibid. p. 222.

mama māyā triguṇātmikā avidyālakṣaṇā prakṛtiḥ sūyate utpādyati sacarācaram jagat | BGBh 9.10, ibid p. 232.

prakṛtiś ca triguṇātmikā sarva-kārya-karaṇa-viśayākāreṇa pariṇata puruṣasya bhogāpavargārtha-kartavyatayā dehendriyādy-ākāreṇa samhanyate | BGBh 13 Introduction, ibid p. 298.

prakṛtav avidyālakṣaṇāyām kārya-kāraṇākāreṇa pariṇatāyām sthitaḥ prakṛtisthaḥ prakṛtim ātmatvena gata ity etat |... *etad uktam bhavati prakṛtisthatvākhyā avidyā guṇeṣu sa saṅgaḥ kāmaḥ saṃsārasya kāraṇam iti* || BGBh 13.21, ibid pp. 334–335.

cites these as well as some *Upaniṣadbhāṣyas* (*Kenopaniṣad* 1.4, *Kaṭhopaniṣad* 1.3.11, and *Īsāvāsyopaniṣad* 12).[35] To show the concurrence of the *vārtika-prasthāna* with the Advaita tradition on this issue, he cites Sureśvara's *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣadbhāṣya-vārtikas*.[36] Thus, there is ample evidence that Śaṅkara considers *avidyā* as a causal component in the creation of the world (*jagat*).[37] Why, then, did Satchidanandendra find it necessary to dispute this, maintaining that *avidyā* in Śaṅkara is only *adhyāsa*, and that a causal *avidyā* that is present in sleep is not compatible with non-duality or *mokṣa*?

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[35] *aviditād vidita-viparitād avyaktād avidyālakṣaṇād vyākṛtabījād anyat* | KeUBh 1.4., in *Upaniṣadbhāṣyam: with the commentaries of Shri Anandagiricharya for all, and in addition commentaries for Kaṭha, Māṇḍūkya and Taittirīya by great acharyas and Taittirīyavārtikā Shri Sureshvaracharya with commentary*, p. 20 (1979).
mahataḥ paramavyaktam sarvasya jagato bījabhūtam kṛta-nāmarūpa-satattvam sarvakārya-kāraṇa-śakti-samāhārarūpam avyaktāvyākṛtākāśādi-nāma-vācyam paramātmany otaprotabhāvena samsāritvam vaṭakanikāyām iva vaṭavrkṣa-śaktiḥ | KaUBh 1.3.11, *Upaniṣadbhāṣyam* p. 95.
sambhavanam sambhūtiḥ sā yasya kāryasya sā sambhūtiḥ tasyā anyā asambhūtiḥ prakṛtiḥ kāraṇam avidyā avyākṛtākhyā kāma-karma-bīja-bhūta-adarśanātmikā | IUBh 12, *Upaniṣadbhāṣyam* p. 12.
Several other passages from *Upaniṣadbhāṣya*s are cited by S. Srirama Sastri in his Introduction to the *Pañcapādikā of Padmapādācārya*, 36–42.

[36] *ātmāvidyaiva naḥ śaktiḥ sarvaśaktasya sarjane* |
nāto'nyathā śaktivādaḥ pramāṇenāvasīyate || BṛUBhV 4.3.1784
tasmād ajñāta-ātmaiva śaktir ity abhidīyate |
ākāśādes tato janma yasmāt śrutyā'bhidhīyate || BṛUBhV 4.3.1787
nāmarūpādinā yeyam avidyā prathate'satī |
māyā tasyāḥ param saukṣmyam mṛtyunaiveti bhaṇyate ||
mṛtyur vai tama ity evam āpa evedam itya api |
avidyā prathate maulī vyaktāvyakātmanā'niśam || BṛUBhV 1.2.135–136
see also BṛUBhV 1.3.54, 188; 1.4.16, 151, 167, 358; 4.3.347, 348, 355, 382, 383
asya dvaitendrajālasya yad upādāna-kāraṇam |
ajñānam tad upāśritya brahma kāraṇam ucyate || BṛUBhV 1.4.371
idam jagad upādānam sarva-śakty-ajam avyayam |
svātmaikājñānāvṛttena grasiṣṇu prabhaviṣṇu ca || BṛUBhV 1.2.126
See also BṛUBhV 1.4.382, 383; 3.9.160; 4.3.1, 388; 4.4.39; TUBhV 1.49, 6.78.

[37] Paul Hacker agrees with Satchidanandendra that *avidyā* means *adhyāsa* in Śaṅkara and suggests that *nāmarūpa*, is the causal 'stuff' of the world. Space does not permit a full treatment of that topic, but in two of the instances cited by Hacker (2.1.14, 27), *nāmarūpa* is said to be brought about or created by *avidyā* (*avidyā-kalpita*). He concedes that Śaṅkara does sometimes equate *avidyā* and *māyā* with *avyākṛta-nāmarūpa*, which he considers a power, *śakti*, of Brahman. (Hacker (1995) "*Distinctive Features of the Doctrine and Terminology of Śaṅkara: Avidyā, Nāmarūpa, māyā, īśvara*" in Wilhelm Halbfass (ed), *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta*, p. 72) For a discussion of this issue see Comans, (2000) *The Method of Early Advaita Vedanta: A Study of Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Padmapāda*, pp. 215–249.

COMPETING VIEWS ON *AVIDYĀ*

Philosophical considerations

It is significant that Satchidanandendra's primary difficulty with the Advaita tradition's representation of *avidyā*, is that it is *bhāvarūpa*.[38] In a debate organized by the Śṛṅgeri Śaṅkarācārya Maṭh in 1976 to try to settle the issue of Swami Satchidanandendra's 45 years of contention with the Advaita tradition, the question that surfaced to frame the debate was whether or not Śaṅkara accepts *bhāvarūpa-mūlāvidyā* as the cause of *saṃsāra*.[39] In the course of the debate the opponents of *mūlāvidyā* raise an interesting objection which touches on the core of the dispute. If *mūlāvidyā* is the cause for *adhyāsa*, they argue, it cannot itself be superimposed (*adhyasta*) and therefore, cannot be destroyed by knowledge of the truth (*tattvajñāna*). This has the undesirable consequence of duality (*dvaita-prasaṅa*) and the impossibility of *mokṣa* (*anirmokṣprasaṅga*). The Advaitin respondent identifies the problem here as not understanding the basic position of Vedanta – Brahman alone is the absolute reality (*brahmaiva paramārthasatya*) and everything different (*bhinna*) from Brahman is not real (*avāstava*). Thus, though *avidyā* is existent (*bhāvarūpa*), it is not real (*avāstava*), and therefore, there is no untenability (*anupap-atti*) in it being removed by knowledge of the truth.

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[38] There are many issues to be discussed here. For instance, if *avidyā* is purely *adhyāsa* how do we understand Śaṅkara's use of compounds like *avidyādhyāropita*, *avdyādhyasta*, *avidyādhyāropaṇa*? This, and other issues, can comprise separate discussions, but by sorting out the basic issue of whether or not *avidyā* can have any existence (*bhāvarūpa*), many of them will resolve.

[39] The debate appears to have been initiated by the Advaita *ācārya*s, who felt that Satchidanandendra's objections to *mūlāvidyā* had been satisfactorily met by publications of the Advaita tradition and that the continued "controversial propagation" of the views of Satchidanandendra was leading to confusion. Through the debate they hoped to come to a definite understanding that would be acceptable to both sides. The traditional Advaita *ācārya*s were represented by V. Ramachandra Sastri and K. Krsna Joshi, and the proponents of Satchidanandendra's views by S. Vittala Sastri. The discussion was overseen by a panel of observers; Veda Brahma Sri Patanka Chandrashekhar Bhat, Hoskere Sri Anantamurti, Sri B. Ramabhat and the poet, Narasimha Bhat. An edited version of the proceedings of the debate was published in Kannada by the Sṛṅgert Maṭh. I am grateful to M. N. Nadkarni for an unpublished English translation of this publication. There is very little in the debate that was not presented, and presented more fully, in the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, but it is interesting to see which issues surfaced for discussion and remained unresolved almost half a century after the publication of the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*.

The problem of reifying *avidyā* resulting in the untenability of non-duality was not unknown to Śaṅkara, who resolves it by establishing that *avidyā* is *mithyā*. In his commentary on BS 4.1.3 (*ātmeti tūpagacchanti grāhayanti ca*), there is a contention that the self (*paramātman*) which is taught in the *śāstra* is not the same as the individual self, since they have opposite qualities, the self being free from fault (*apahatapāpman*), while the individual is the opposite. Śaṅkara responds that this is not a difficulty, for the status of having opposite properties is resolved in their being *mithyā*.[40] Then, at the end of this discussion Śaṅkara adds this interesting note. "The fault/objection that is put forward by some, that non-duality is untenable because the self has duality due to *avidyā*, that also is answered by this (discussion)."[41] That is, *avidyā* is *mithyā*.

A discussion of the *mithyātvam* of *avidyā* is particularly relevant in considering Satchidanandandra's work, since the outcome of Satchidanandendra's understanding of *mithyā*, and of *avidyā* as purely superimposition, is subjective idealism (*dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi*), which he acknowledges and defends.[42] Since this is a view which is refuted by Śaṅkara, who argues for a *sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi-vāda*,[43] Swami Satchidānandendra's understanding of *mithyā* requires examination. It is based on a definition of *satya* and *anṛta* in the *Taittirīopaniṣadbhāṣya*.[44] There, Śaṅkara defines what is real as that which never deviates in nature from the form in which it was originally ascertained, while what is not real (*anṛta*) departs from the form in which it was first determined. What is real is not restricted by the three periods of time, past, present and future, while what is false, by implication, is.[45] In the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, showing the reality of the self, Śaṅkara

[40] *na hy apahata-pāpmatvādi-guṇo viparīta-guṇatvena śakyate grahitum viparītaguṇo vāpahatpāpmatvādi-guṇatvena. . . yat tūktam na viruddha-guṇayor anyonyātmatva-sambhava iti | naiṣa doṣaḥ | viruddha-guṇatāyā mithyātvopapatteḥ . . . evaṃ ca sati advaiteśvarasyāpahatpāpmatvādi-guṇatā viparītaguṇtā tv itarasya mithyeti vyavatiṣṭhate*. BSBh 4.1.3, *Brahmasūtraśāṇkarabhāṣyam*, pp. 833–834.

[41] *yo'pi doṣaś codyate kaiścid avidyayā kila ātmanaḥ sadvitīyatvād advaitānupapattir iti so'pi etena prayuktaḥ* BSBh 4.1.3, *Brahmasūtraśāṇkarabhāṣyam*, p. 834.

[42] *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, para. 41, 42.

[43] BSBh 2.2.28; GKBh 4.3.28.

[44] *yadrūpeṇa yan niśitaṃ tat tadrūpaṃ na vyabhicarati tat satyaṃ | yadrūpeṇa yan niśitaṃ tat tadrūpaṃ vyabhicarati tad anṛtam ity ucyate* | TUBh 2.1.1; also *ekarūpeṇa hy avasthito yo'rthaḥ sa paramārthaḥ | loke tadviṣayaṃ jñānaṃ samyagjñānam ity ucyate* BSBh 2.1.11.

[45] *kālatrayena yanna parichidyate*. KaUBh 1.2.14.

points out that it does not deviate from its nature in all three states of experience.[46] On the basis of these statements, Swami Satchidanandendra concludes that if *avidyā* were to exist in all three states of experience, it would be real and could not be removed by knowledge.[47] It therefore becomes imperative for him to establish that *avidyā* does not exist in sleep in order to establish that *avidyā* is not real.[48] Further, considering reality in terms of causality, Swami Satchidanandendra argues that what is false (*mithyā*) has no requirement for a material cause, etc., for it is not tenable that something that is established as having a cause–effect relationship is also *mithyā*.[49] He makes two related assertions here about *mithyā*. One is that something that is *mithyā* cannot have a material cause. It is because it is *mithyā* that its appearance is tenable.[50] Indeed, what is called the falseness (*mithyātva*) of a thing is that it appears without existing. The second is that it is not tenable that something that has a cause–effect relationship is *mithyā*. If it does, it cannot be *mithyā*.[51]

Śaṅkara's definition of *satya* and *anṛta* in the *Taittirīopaniṣadbhāṣya* provides for distinguishing subjective (*prātibhāsika*) from empirical (*vyāvahārika*) reality. Śaṅkara extends his definition to include the *vyāvahārika/pāramārthika* distinction when he adds, "Therefore, modification is false," and illustrates his statement defining *satya* and *anṛta* by citing the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.4.1, *vācārambhaṇa-śruti*.[52] "Modification is mere name centered on speech/the tongue; clay alone is real', because in this manner it is ascertained that *sat* alone is real." In the Upaniṣad and Śaṅkara's

[46] *na hi yasya yatsvarūpaṃ tat tadvyabhicāri dṛṣṭam | svapnajāgarite tu caitanyamātratvād vyabhicarataḥ | suṣupte cet svarūpaṃ vyabhicaret tannaṣṭaṃ nāstīti vā bādhyam eva syāt, āgantukānām ataddharmānām ubhayātmakatvadarśanāt, yathā dhanavastrādīnāṃ nāśo dṛṣṭaḥ | Upadeśasāhasrī* 2.89 (prose).

[47] *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, para. 27, 53. A similar argument is made against the retention of the distinction between Brahman and the individual in sleep (*Mūlāvidyānirāsa* para. 44).

[48] Swami Satchidanandendra's first publication, the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa* (1929) was written at the urging of his mentor, Krishnaswamy Iyer, to prove that there is no *avidyā* in sleep.

[49] *tad etad asāraṃ mithyāvastuna upādānādikāṅkṣā-virahāt | na hi kārya-kāraṇādibhāvena vyavasthitaṃ vastu atha ca mithyety upapadyate | Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, para. 40, p. 47.

[50] Ibid. para. 125, 126.

[51] *yat tu mithyārthasya prathanānupapattir eva tasya sopādānatvaṃ sādhyatīti tad apy apeśalam | mithyātvād eva tat-prathanopapatteḥ | idam eva hi mithyātvaṃ nāma vastuno yad vastusannabhavatyatha ca prathata iti | Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, para. 128, p. 153. See also note 40 above.

[52] This is the basis of the important *Brahmasūtra* 2.1.14 *tad ananyatvam ārambhaṇaśabdādibhyaḥ*.

commentary here and elsewhere,[53] *mithyā* is presented as that which has no independent existence (*adhiṣṭhāna-ananyatva*), while *satya* depends on nothing else for its existence.[54] Clay, for example, is real (*satya*) relative to the pot that is created from it, since the clay exists independently of the existence of the pot. The clay pot, on the other hand, has no existence at all without clay, and is, therefore, *mithyā*.

Thus, while Swami Satchidanandendra maintains that *mithyā* has no requirement for a material cause, arguing that it is not tenable that something that is established by a cause–effect relationship is also *mithyā*, his Advaita opponents hold just the opposite view. What is *mithyā* is defined as that which has a requirement for a material cause (*adhiṣṭhāna-ananya*). Further, what is *mithyā* is an effect, and is established as having a cause–effect relationship. *Satya*, on the other hand, in the absolute (*pāramārthika*) sense, is the 'cause' of all causes, that is, it is not within the realm of cause–effect.

The subjective idealism that follows from Satchidanandendra's understanding of *mithyā* does have validity in the Advaita tradition from the absolute (*pāramārthika*) standpoint. Prakāśānanda (1550–1600), an Advaita *ācārya*, propounds this view predominantly, and other *ācāryas* advance it on occasion when the context is purely *pāramārthika*. Indeed, from the *pāramārthika* standpoint, there is no *avidyā* at all. Such a view, however, does not account for the empirical reality (*vyāvahārika-sattā*), which is why Śaṅkara argues against it, and in favor of a view that does (*sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi*).[55] Śaṅkara holds that the world is not a creation of the observer (*dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi*), but rather, is seen because it is there (*sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭi*). Both *prātibhāsika* and *vyāvahārika* realities are superimposed on, or have their being in, Brahman. In the recognition of oneself as Brahman is the recognition that one is the reality of everything (*sarvātmabhāva*), which Śaṅkara has characterized as liberation (*mokṣa*).[56]

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[53] See the *ananyatva-adhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtra*, especially *bhāve copalabdheḥ* 2.1.15.

[54] *tadadhīnatvād arthavat* | BS 1.4.3; *vācārambhaṇaṃ vikāro nāmadheyaṃ mṛtikety eva satyam* | ChU 6.4.1; *abhyupagamya ceyam vyāvahārikam bhoktṛ-bhogyalakṣaṇam vibhāgam syāl lokavad iti parihāro'bhihitaḥ | na tv ayam vibhāgaḥ paramārthato'sti yasmāt tayoḥ kāryakāraṇayor ananyatvam avagamyate| kāryam ākāśādikam bahuprapañcam jagat, kāraṇam parambrahma, tasmāt kāraṇāt paramārthato'nanyatvam vyatirekeṇābhāvaḥ kāryasyāvagamyate | kutaḥ | ārambhaṇśabdādibhyaḥ* BSBh 2.1.14, p. 372.

[55] BSBh 2.2.28; GKBh 4.3.28.

[56] See ĪUBh 9; KeUBh 2.4; KUBh 2.1.10; TUBh 2.1.1; MuUBh 3.1.2,, 4, 9; MāUBh 3; BSBh 2.1.14, 2.3.46.

Shifting standpoints

Satchidanandendra makes frequent use of shifting from a *vyāvahārika* to a *pārmārthika* standpoint in an effort to establish his position. This is a known technique in *advaita* dialectics and is particularly compatible with his subjective idealist position. But he is often intractable on this, creating otherwise resolvable conflict. A brief look at an objection raised agaist the absense of ignorance in sleep and Satchidanandendra's response to it will illustrate how he uses this tactic. His opponent asks how the world which cannot be experienced in sleep can appear without any cause, i.e. *avidyā*, when one awakes. Satchidanandendra dismisses the objection by an appeal to experience and a change of standpoint. The world that is false in the vision of a liberated person is experienced by the one who is bound.[57] Later, when it is pointed out that the one who is liberated in sleep (because of the absence of *avidyā* there) cannot become bound when he wakes up, Satchidanandendra answers that a person, even though always free, imagines himself to be bound. Thus, the individual thinks that the world is not perceived in sleep and exists when he is awake, even though there is always no world.[58] This is all true, of course, from the absolute standpoint (*pāramārthika-dṛṣṭyā*) and Satchidanandendra's opponents would not contest this. The issue under discussion, however is within the relative (*vyāvahārika*) standpoint. It is only from this standpoint that any discussion about *avidyā*, states of experience, the world, etc., is relevant. From the absolute standpoint, none of these has any existence.

Historical/sociological considerations

In considering what drove Satchidanandendra to contest traditional views on *avidyā* in Śaṅkara, there are not only philosophical, but compelling historical and sociological factors.

The Advaita tradition has a rich history of responding to new situations and challenges, both external and internal. Besides defending basic tenets, it has also responded by assimilating new ideas or approaches that enhance its exegesis without harming its fundamental position of non-duality. For example, Śaṅkara uses

[57] *maivam| muktadṛṣṭyā mithyābhūtasyāpi prapañcasya baddhenānubhūyamānatvadarśanāt. Mūlāvidānirāsa*, 101, para. 76.

[58] *evam eva suṣuptau prapañcagrahaṇaṃ prabodhe ca prapañcasatyatvaṃ cābhimanyate sadā niṣprapañca eca san iti, ibid.*

Sāṅkhya categories in his discussions of the nature of creation, and both Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara use Buddhist terminology as well as structures of argument found in the works of Nāgārjuna. New developments in the field of Nyāya (*navya-nyāya*) were incorporated into the dialectics of Madhusūdana Saraswati and others.

The most recent challenge to the Advaita tradition, and to Indian thought in general, has come from Western thought. Not just the ideas but the form in which they appeared had far-reaching consequences for Indian thought. With British colonialism, changes were introduced that created a new situation for the Indian thinker. The most important was the change in the education system. The introduction of Western thought into the education system with, significantly, English as the medium of instruction (Viswanathan, 1995: 431–437), and coupled with this, the segregation of traditional Sanskrit studies into separate institutions creating what Daya Krishna has called an ‘‘effective apartheid’’ between traditional and modern education (Daya Krishna, 1997: 191),[59] posed unique challenges to Indian thinkers. Exposed to Western thought and estranged from his own intellectual tradition, the Indian thinker found himself in a ‘‘predicament’’ which has been eloquently expressed by J. L. Mehta.

> Under the colonial origins of his modernization, the Indian encountered ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’ and began forthwith the long journey of reinterpreting his tradition in these Western categories. More importantly, he began thinking about it and re-conceiving it in the English language, not just to expound it to English scholars, but as the principal medium of his own self-understanding. Such self-understanding was reflected back in new meanings being given to ancient words in the Indian languages, and it also expressed itself in the way traditional meanings were themselves reflected in the use of concepts embedded in English words (Mehta, 1974: 60).

This new group of Indian thinkers developed in different directions, and by the time of Satchidanandendra there were two main streams of Westernized research. One was purely rational, an apologetic to Western criticism of Indian thought as mystical and non-rational, attempting to legitimate Indian thought to the West. The other was a post-colonial reaction to the rational approach. These thinkers presented Indian thought as intuitive and attempted to establish an identity independent of European thought. Satchidanandendra’s work, particularly the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*, reflects both these streams. Though his commitment was philosophical, Satchidanandendra was

[59] Daya Krishna traces the beginning of this ‘‘apartheid’ to the establishment of the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781, the Sanskrit College in 1782 and the Asiatic Society of Calcutta in 1784, *Indian Philosophy*, 191.

not immune to the socio-political influences of his time. His search for an authentic tradition was symptomatic of the Indian thinker's post-colonial search for an identity "uncontaminated by universalistic or Eurocentric concepts," (During, 1995: 125). Though Satchidanandendra began his work before the independence of India, as Ashcroft et al. have noted, post-colonialism begins with the moment of colonial contact, since it is at this point that the "discourse of oppositionality", and necessarily, efforts at self-definition begin (Ashcroft et al., 1998: 117). Subject to the pressures of modernity he responded with what Hacker has called " a hastily improvised mixture" of tradition and Western thought "impinging upon it" (Mehta, 1974: 61).

Traditional influences on Satchidanandendra

Though Satchidanandendra places himself firmly within the Advaita tradition, his exposure to traditional instruction was limited. He was deeply inspired by Kurtukoti Mahābhāgavata (Gangoli, 1997: 12, 14), who later became the Śaṅkarācārya of Karvir Maṭh, and his ideas on *avidyā* were almost certainly shaped by this Mahābhāgavata, an exponent of Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa. It was he who arranged for Satchidanandendra's intitation into the study of Śāṅkarabhāṣya by Swami Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharathi of Śṛṅgeri Maṭh, and for his subsequent study of the Śāṅkarabhāṣya with Virupaksa Sastri, the official pandit (*āsthānavidvān*) of the Mysore court. Virupaksa Sastri did not go into great detail with his student because he felt that his knowledge of Sanksrit was limited and that he lacked expertise in grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), logic (*tarka*) and other disciplines considered prerequisite to the study of the *bhāṣya*. His study was thus confined to a very simple reading of the *Upaniṣadbhāṣyas* with no study of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* or the explanatory texts (*vyākhyānas*) that would normally be part of the traditional study.[60] It is this, his disciples say, that accounts for the purity of Satchidanandendra's understanding of Śaṅkara – it was never corrupted by the influences of the *vyākhyānas*. What is extolled here by his disciples is regarded as a serious deficiency in his study by the traditional Advaitins. When Satchidanandendra submitted the manuscript of the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa* to Virupaksa Sastri, he wrote on the manuscript "It should not be respected by those who are desirous of liberation," (*śreyaskāmair na*

[60] Personal communication from Satchidanandendra's disciple, Laksminarasimhamurthi.

ādaraṇīyam). He observed that Satchidanandendra "did not know *sampradāya*" placing him outside of the Advaita tradition.[61] Apart from a few months of study with Virupaksa Sastri, Satchidanandendra undertook independent study of Vedanta texts.

He studied the works of several Advaita thinkers, in addition to Śaṅkara (Satchidanandendra, 1964) and some of their ideas are evident in his work. Like Maṇḍana, Satchidanandendra finds that *avidyā* is not a material cause (*upādānakārṇa*) or a power (*śakti*) and that Brahman is the only cause of the world. Satchidanandendra's interpretation of *avidyā* as the superimposition of the self and non-self due to the absence of knowledge of Brahman is similar to Bhāskara's view that *avidyā* is the misapprehension of the self as the non-self and its cause is not knowing Brahman. Prakāśānanda's subjective idealism, the ramifications of it like the untenability of causality and his arguments to support these positions also appear in Satchidanandendra's *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*. The most striking influence, however, is that of Nāgeśa Baṭṭa (1650–1750), a grammarian who wrote a treatise on Vedanta in his *Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta-laghumañjuṣā*. Nāgeśa, like Satchidanandendra, rejects the *Pañcapādikā*'s characterization of *avidyā* as existent (*bhāvarūpa*), indeterminable (*anirvacanīya*) and beginningless (*anādi*). Instead, Nāgeśa maintains that *avidyā* in Śaṅkara's commentaries signifies error (*bhrānti-jñāna*) and its impressions (*tatsaṃskāra*). He sees *avidyā* only as an effect, having an undifferentiated and differentiated form, but no causal form. This is consistent with Satchidanandendra's representation of *avidyā* purely as an effect, and his rejection of a causal ignorance. In other ways, Satchidanandendra's views on *avidyā* differ from those of Nāgeśa, but the seed for his understanding *avidyā* only as superimpostion can be seen here. Apart from *avidyā* being *adhyāsa* and apparent objects not having a birth, Satchidanandendra found Nāgeśa's views "fundamentally opposed to Sankara" (Satchidanandendra, 1963: 34). He appears to have been unaware of the influence of Nāgeśa on his own thought, through his teacher, Kurtukoti Mahābhāgavata (see note 30).

Modern influences on Satchidanandendra

There were two modern thinkers who greatly influenced the thought of Satchidanandendra. K.A. Krishnaswamy Iyer (1865–1942) author of *Vedanta or the Science of Reality* and V. Subrahmanya Iyer (1869–

[61] Laksminarasimhamurthi personal communication.

1949) author of *An Inquiry into the Truth or Tattva Vicara* were significant mentors and patrons for Satchidanandendra. Both authors attached great, even exclusive importance to the analysis of the three states of experience (*avasthā-traya-viveka*) in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* and emphasized the study of Gauḍapāda's kārikās on this Upaniṣad. V. Subrahmanya Iyer repeatedly refers to this method as the unique and superior contribution of Indian thought to the Western world (e.g. Subrahmanya Iyer, 1980: 116, 119). Satchidanandendra's emphasis on the method of the analysis of the three states of experience (*avasthā-traya-prakriyā*) as the best, and even the only effective method of inquiry into the nature of the self, especially in his earlier writings, was undoubtedly influenced by V. Subrahmanya Iyer and K. A. Krishnaswamy Iyer who held this position. The *avasthā-traya-prakriyā* formed not only the substance of their understanding of Vedanta, but was also a means to assert the superiority of Vedanta over Western philosophical approaches to discerning reality. The analysis of the three states of experience was presented as Vedanta's unique and consummate contribution to the understanding of reality (Krishnaswamy Iyer, 1969: 79, 83). Since Western approaches dealt only with the waking state, these authors judged them inherently inferior and ultimately inadequate methods of revealing reality. The speculations of Western thinkers that encompassed only one state were compared unfavorably to Vedanta's comprehensive analysis of all states of experience. Interestingly, the analysis of the three states of experience, with particular emphasis on the analysis of the state of sleep as revelatory appears frequently in Western/Westernized research.[62]

The principal features of Satchidanandendra's thought which can be traced to the works of these authors are a focus on the *avasthātrayaprakriyā* with the presentation of sleep as a state through which one can gain insight into reality, the absence of potentiality or ignorance in that state, and a subjective idealism in the waking state. In addition, there is the emphasis on intuition and rational inquiry, and the subordination of the authority of scripture (*śruti*) to these modes of inquiry. The preoccupation with methodolgy and narrow insistence on one defining method was a significant part of the legacy that Satchidanandendra inherited from these authors.

[62] See, for example, K. C. Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*; Debabrata Sinha, *Metaphysics of Experience in Advaita Vedanta* and Andrew Fort, *The Self and Its States*.

Both K.A. Krishnaswamy Iyer and V. Subrahmanya Iyer urged a return to the study of the *Prasthānatrayabhāṣyas* disregarding all the sub-commentaries and it was likely from them that Satchidanandendra drew guidance for his own study of Vedanta. Both authors were familiar with Western thought, with V. Subrahmanya Iyer engaged in dialogue with, and critical of, Western philosophers, while K. A. Krishnaswamy Iyer., though occasionally critical, tended to look for common ground, sometimes appropriating their arguments for his own exposition of Vedanta. Satchidanandendra addresses contemporary Western scholars or Indian Western educated scholars in his English works, particularly his English introductions to his Sanskrit works (Satchidanandendra, 1958, 1964). He is uniformly critical of them, but gives them only superficial consideration. Unlike his mentors, V. Subrahmanya Iyer and K. A. Krishnaswamy Iyer, Satchidanandendra does not engage in sustained dialogue with his Western counterparts. His focus is, rather, on traditional Advaitins as his serious dialogue partners.

Though he is hardly mentioned in Satchidanandendra's works, Vivekananda had an early and lasting influence on him. He was commissioned to translate Vivekananda's Rajayoga into Kannada, and with the proceeds from this work started his publishing unit, the Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya (Gangoli, 1997: 15). We can see Vivekananda's influence in Satchidanandendra's mission to discover the 'real' Śaṅkara in order to restore Vedanta to its authentic form. The theme of the 'disciples who did not understand the Master' in Satchidanandendra's rejection of all the subcommentaries beginning with the *Pañcapādikā*, is also reminiscent of Vivekananda (Complete Works 8, Vol. 3, 265). Vivekananda's called for a retrieval of the 'real' Sankara was much more clearly linked to social and political reforms, and he made no serious scholarly attempt to do this, reinterpreting Śaṅkara in accord with his larger political agenda. Satchidanandendra, however, took this call seriously, delving deeply into textual studies to recover the 'authentic' Śaṅkara.

'Retrieving' Śaṇkara/Vedanta

Satchidanandendra sought to free Vedanta from both modern misconceptions in the form of Western interpretations of Vedanta, as well as 'corruptions' introduced by post-Śaṅkara commentators which made *advaita* vulnerable to later attacks. Historically, he considered that Vedanta had been misunderstood and criticized by Rāmānuja and others on the issue of *avidyā*. In modern times, he faulted West-

ernized scholars like Radhakrishnan and Dasgupta and Western scholars like Thibaut for misunderstanding Vedanta as not conforming to Western standards for philosophical thought (Satchidanandendra, 1964). Vedanta was considered non-rational (mystical), speculative and theological in that it is dependent on revelation. Therefore, to legitimate Śaṅkara, and thereby, Vedanta, to Western thought, Satchidanandendra attempted to show that Śaṅkara advocated reason and intuition, and was neither theological nor speculative. He characterized Sanakra's method for understanding Brahman as a "rational system based on universal intuition" (Satchidanandendra, 1957: 11). He also ruled out *śruti* as the only *pramāṇa*, subordinating it to reason and one's own experience. To remove what he considered the speculative elements of the concept of *avidyā*, he criticized *mūlāvidyā*. Satchidanandendra held that Śaṅkara's system differs from others in that it is not speculative. It is not "one more school" of speculation created by the "artifice of certain peculiar ways of interpretation." What makes it genuine is its method of inquiry. Śaṅkara does not postulate any theory like that of *mūlāvidyā*, or require the acceptance of *pramāṇas*. Rather, he begins with a discussion of *adhyāsa* and "appeals to universal intuition." (Satchidanandendra, 1973: 8). *Avidyā*, as *adhyāsa*, is available for everyone's experience. It is merely "mistaking one thing for another (*atasmin tadbuddhiḥ*)" and need not be proved for it is recognized in the experience of all of us (*sarvaloka-pratyakṣaḥ*). It is understood in relation to knowledge (*vidyā*) and is "intelligible to all who are familiar with the antipathy between knowledge and error in everyday life" (Satchidanandendra, 1957: 11). By characterizing *avidyā* in this commonly understood way, Satchidanandendra sought to free it from the speculative and theological elements that he found in the concept of *mūlāvidyā*. Thereby, Śaṅkara could be legitimated in Western terms. Śaṅkara is not speculative because he appeals to reason and intuition and does not postulate a hypothetical *mūlāvidyā*. He is not theological because *śruti* is not the final *pramāṇa*, that being oneself.

With this commitment to independent rational inquiry, as opposed to an exegesis of scripture along traditional lines, an emphasis on certain established methods in Advaita Vedanta follows naturally. One of the most prevalent is the emphasis on negation (*neti neti*) as the means to know the self as Brahman. The premise is that once all the features erroneously attributed to the self have been negated, its nature will remain, self-revealing. Paradoxically, in spite of the self-revealing nature of the self, and claims of the adequacy of negation as

a method, there is the necessity for a final "intuition" of the self as Brahman. This is a hallmark of Neo-Vedanta thought, which we see in the works of K. C. Bhattacharyya and R. Das, for example. Purely analytical philosophers, on the other hand, avoid appeal to intuition as incompatible with the analytic approach. Among them, G. C. Nayak seriously challenges the legitimacy of intuition as a means for enlightenment, according to Śaṅkara (Nayak, 1995–1996: 71–82).

While Satchidanandendra is unequivocal on the primacy of reason and intuition over *śruti*, he is ambiguous about his appropriation of another Western research method. When addressing his "orthodox … students of Vedanta" Satchidanandendra adheres to the traditional view that Western historical and chronological methods are not applicable to the teachings of Vedanta (Satchidanandendra, 1958: 1). But when addressing his Western readers in English, he makes use of these methods. In the *Vedānta-prakriyā-pratyabhijñā*, for instance, he traces the origin and development of ideas, discusses questions of authorship and outlines a historical view of Vedanta, dividing it into three periods. His interest, however, is not historical, but approbation by both the Western and Advaita traditions. He uses historical and philological methods both to defend traditional views and to substantiate his own challenges to the tradition. Thus, Satchidanandendra has at least two stances towards Western thought. On the one hand, he appropriates Western methods and ideas to present his own views of the Advaita tradition, possibly to legitimate the tradition to the West and resist its marginalization. On the other hand, he uses those appropriated means to refute Western interpretations of Vedanta.

Authenticity

As a result of the appropriation of Western concepts and methods, and their application to the retrieval of tradition, Satchidanandendra's work is what post-colonial theorists consider the inevitable hybrid of post-colonial works. This amounts to the tradition being 'retrieved' in a non-traditional form, and consequently, from the standpoint of the tradition, brings its authenticity into question. There are those who argue that in the post-colonial situation, authenticity is always "relative and context bound" and that it is not possible to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic discourse with regard to ancient traditions (Fee, 1995: 245). Appropriation of new approaches is historically part of the the Advaita tradition,

however, and does not compromise authenticity if it is consistent with non-duality. There are those who regard efforts to recover authentic pre-colonial traditions as misguided, since they tend to essentialize traditions and overlook the possibility of a developing, dynamic tradition (Ashcroft et al., 1998: 21). Further, assuming they are successful, they run the risk of marginalizing the 'authentic' tradition and thereby undermining its social and political aims, if there are any.[63] Moreover, post-colonial theory challenges the very assumption that there is an 'authentic' homogeneous pre-colonial tradition. Even if there is, hybridization has made it impossible to retrieve it.[64]

A unique feature of Satchidanandendra's work that distinguishes him from other post-colonial authors working to retrieve an authentic tradition is that he is not only trying to rid the tradition of colonial influences, but also, of pre-colonial influences. In fact, his effort to free the tradition from Western 'contamination' is only secondary. His primary focus is on elimination of the contaminating elements within the tradition. This is not at all inconsistent with the aim of legitimating the tradition to the West, for the aspects of the tradition that he challenges are those that are problematic to a Western reading of it.

Satchidanandendra worked on the premise that the basic teachings are complete, and therefore, that there is no possibility of a development of ideas. There is no room for innovation; any new insight, such as *mūlāvidyā*, is viewed as heretical, or anticipated by the earliest works. He handles the innovative aspect of his own work by disclaiming it as not his own thinking, but the previously unrecognized, though accurate, representation of Śaṅkara. In his view, time had brought degeneration in the tradition so that the task of the present is to "live up to the potential of the past" (Halbfass, 1988: 361). Achieving continuity with the past, specifically with Śaṅkara and Gauḍapāda, is given great importance.

The project of retrieving the 'authentic' Śaṅkara was linked to the larger aim of uncovering the authentic Advaita tradition. Because of Śaṅkara's stature within the tradition, these were seen a synonymous endeavors. While this connection is not contested within the Advaita tradition, there is, nevertheless, a shift in emphasis in Satchidanandendra's approach that reflects a non-traditional influence. Though

[63] Diane Brydon, "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy," 141; Gareth Griffiths, "The Myth of Authenticity," 237–241; Margery Fee, "Who Can Write as Other?" 242–245 in *Post-Colonial Studies Reader*.

[64] Griffiths, 237–241; Fee, 242–245; Sharpe, 99–102; Spivak, 24–28; Brydon 136–142; Sangari, 141 in *Post-Colonial Studies Reader*.

post Śaṅkara commentators, both critics and defenders of Śaṅkara, engage with ideas whose origin can be traced to Śaṅkara, there is no direct reference to Śaṅkara by name, and little oblique reference to, or quoting of his works, even by his purported immediate disciples. The focus in Indian thought, well-known as a source of frustration to historians, was always on the ideas, not a given person. For Satchidanandendra, on the other hand, the focus is entirely on Śaṅkara. The question that informed his entire life's work can be formulated as "What did Śaṅkara say?" He deals with possible points of contentions in the works of other commentators by measuring them against Śaṅkara. His standard for determining authenticity in Advaita is Śaṅkara, which the tradition would not contest, but the focus on a single person as representative of tradition is foreign to the Advaita tradition of *paramparā*. The difference between Satchidanandendra and the tradition on this point is a radical one. Satchidanandendra effectively places Śaṅkara above the tradition and is willing to separate Śaṅkara from the tradition on a point of conflict. The tradition, on the other hand, works to reconcile divergent views while (ideologically, at least) subordinating the views of any given person to the vision of non-duality.

Not surprisingly,[65] the very features of Satchidanandendra's thought that authenticate him in one tradition, Western or Indian, deny him that approbation in the other. Yet there are ways in which he is authentic in both – and neither. Although he challenges the Advaita tradition, he sees himself as its reformer and purifier and seeks validation from the tradition. Though he follows certain traditional norms and professes a non-dual vision, he departs from tradition in both his method and in the substance of his doctrine. Several features of his work that distance him from the Advaita tradition lend him credibility in Western thought, many of them, of course, appropriated from Western thought. His minimizing the status of *śruti* as a *pramāṇa*, giving primacy to reason, circumventing the need for a teacher and oral transmission, finding the text an adequate source of knowledge, and his generally philological/historical approach along with problematizing the contraditictions in the works of the post-Śaṅkara Advaita commentators are all aspects of

[65] See Halbfass, *India and Europe*, especially chapter 19 for an account of the structure of Hindu traditional thought and how it differs from Western thought structures.

his work that deny his validation by the Advaita tradition but are compatible with Western thought.

Though Western thought may endorse these aspects of his work, it cannot fully embrace him, for in several other ways, he does not conform to Western intellectual standards. Some of these are the same features that legitimate him within the Indian thought traditions. For example, his rejection of the concept of progress and thought development, with all innovations being anticipated in the original texts, and the disclaiming of ideas as his own. The attempt to reclaim the 'authentic' tradition, the idealizing of the past and efforts to maintain continuity with it, as well as the conviction that there is one true reading of a text are hallmarks of the Indian tradition which are rejected by post-modern thought, though not the Enlightenment thought that was prevalent in Satchidanandendra's time.

There are other features of Satchidanandendra's thought that are problematic for both Indian and Western traditions. One is his approach to innovative thought. Neither tradition takes as rigid a position as he in rejecting new developments, though the Western tradition has necessarily much wider acceptance of new ideas since the search for truth always remains open. Similarly, while Satchidanandendra's willingness to address contradictions within the tradition is commendable in Western thought, the categorical nature of his disposing of them may not be so readily accepted. Neither does the Advaita tradition accept his failure to attempt to resolve contradiction within the tradition, or his dismissal of innovative thought without trying to account for it as an extension of prior thinking. His concept of tradition as static rather than dynamic is anathema to both traditions, but again, the Advaita tradition is dynamic within much narrower limits than the Western thought tradition.

As we have seen, the hybrid nature of Satchidanandendra's work does not necessarily undermine its authenticity. Historically, the Advaita tradition has appropriated methods from the other *darśanas* as aids to exegesis that enhance the unfoldment of the basic tenets of non-duality. Similarly, appropriating Western methods, or even concepts, should not in itself be considered problematic, as long as non-duality is not compromised. The history and spirit of the tradition allow for such appropriation. However, there are those in both traditions who idealize a return to a 'pure' form of the tradition, uncontaminated by later influences, and on that basis, judge it to be authentic. Ironically Satchidanandendra is one of them, evidently not aware of the hybrid nature of his own work.

During his lifetime Satchidanandendra drew the attention of some modern Indian scholars who engaged in dialogue with him over the contents of the *Mūlāvidyānirāsa*.[66] The issues raised there are still being addressed by Indian scholars today.[67] A learned group of his adherents gained the name, among certain scholars, "The Mysore School" (Mahadevan, 1985: 46–49). With two notable exceptions, Western scholars have barely noticed his work. Paul Hacker independently came to some of the same conclusions as Satchidanandendra on *avidyā* in Śaṅkara finding "unexpected support" for his conclusions in the *Mulāvidyānirāsa* (Hacker, 1995: 66). Hacker's thoughts in this regard have been commented upon by Michael Comans (Comans, 2000: 246–249). Karl Potter, more than 20 years ago, identified Satchidanandendra as a "vehement critic of the distinction of the two *avidyās* (of Maṇḍana)" (Potter, 1981: 79), and recently reversed an earlier assessment and expressed support for Satchidanandendra's views.[68]

Though Satchidanandendra would locate himself at the core of the tradition, even more traditional than his traditional Advaita contemporaries and a large part of the tradition itself, in fact, he straddles both Indian and Western traditions. He was a professed Advaitin, but sought validation from both traditions, though less vigorously, and perhaps less consciously, from the Western thought tradition. He appropriated methods and ideas from both, conforming in certain ways to the norms of each. In some sense he came close to forming a bridge between the Western and Indian thought traditions; finally, perhaps inevitably, he is not fully endorsed by either. Yet he has made a lasting contribution to the vitality of the Advaita thought tradition by reviving intense debate, both within and across the boundaries of the Advaita tradition, on an important topic that has ramifications for the possibility of non-duality and *mokṣa*. The discussion on the nature of *avidyā* has engaged some of the finest Indian thinkers for centuries, and Satchidanandendra has contributed to extending the reach of this discussion beyond the borders of India. The dialectics in his Sanskrit works reminds us that fruitful engagement with this issue requires in-depth exploration of source material,

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[66] Kuppuswami Sastri and M. Hiriyanna are named in Paul Hacker's, "Distinctive Features of the Doctrine and Terminology of Sankara" in *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Modern Vedanta*, p. 98 n. 24.

[67] See A. G. Krishna Warrier, *God in Advaita*, 111, n. 52; and T. M. P. Mahadevan, *Superimposition in Advaita Vedanta*.

[68] Karl Potter, *More on Why Most Advaitins Were Not Sankara's Advaitins*, paper presented at the 14th International Vedanta Conference, Miami, Ohio, April 2004.

and offers opportunities for a level of discussion that can deepen our understanding of key issues in Indian thought.

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